Chapter 6

Publicity and Public Relations

6.1 This year, we attached greater importance to enhancing public understanding of our jurisdiction by organising talks for specific target groups while maintaining publicity on our role via multi-media. Meanwhile, we sustained our efforts on promoting a positive service culture among Government departments and public bodies by The Ombudsman's Awards, seminars and visits.

Promotion Campaign

6.2 Our Announcement of Public Interest ("API") flimclip was broadcast on TV, radio, buses and trains from late February to March 2008. Our aim was for our API to reinforce public awareness of our role and functions.

6.3 To compare the effectiveness of the different electronic media, we issue simple questionnaires for feedback from complainants during and right after the launch period. Their responses provide us with insight for mapping out our future strategy for publicity and public education.

Media Relations

6.4 To publicise our investigative work, we hold press conferences at regular intervals to announce investigations of community interest. This year, we have published the results of inquiries into two complaints and four direct investigations. We also declared the initiation of five direct investigations. Summaries of the investigation reports announced were released through *OmbudsNews*, our newsletter coinciding with our press conferences. These are also available on our website.

Fig. 6.1 API

Fig. 6.2 The Ombudsman in Press Conference

6.5 Media coverage helps to promote public awareness of our work. This not only updates information on what we have done on matters of public concern, but also brings out how we aim to improve public administration. In this connection, we thank complainants and complainee organisations, without those cooperation we could not fulfill our mission as effectively.

Public Information

6.6 This year, we have updated our "Complaint Form", "Publicity Leaflet" and "Performance Pledge" for clearer and correct information on our services. These publications are available in our Resource Centre, on our website and in District Offices of the Home Affairs Department.

Fig. 6.3

Press Conference/Public Announcement	
4 July 2007	• Publication of 19th Annual Report
5 July 2007	• Declaration of direct investigations into i. Government's arrangements for handling water seepage complaints ii. Effectiveness of the Integrated Call Centre in handling complaints
1 November 2007	• Announcement of findings of two anonymised investigation reports on complaints - i. No fore-warning on surcharge for overstaying in public housing unit ii. Inadequate disclosure to the Home Ownership Scheme purchasers on slope maintenance responsibility • Declaration of direct investigation into Government measures for street management
12 November 2007	• Announcement of findings of direct investigation on mechanism for handling conflict of interests in organisations subvented by the Leisure and Cultural Sevices Department
14 February 2008	• Announcement of findings of direct investigation on special examination arrangements for students with specific learning difficulties by the Education Bureau and Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority • Declaration of direct investigations into i. the abuse of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme Special Grants ii. the support for students with specific learning difficulties
13 March 2008	• Announcement of findings of direct investigation on alleged overcharging of water bill by the Water Supplies Department
10 April 2008	• Announcement of findings of direct investigation on handling of water seepage complaints

Chapter 6
Publicity and Public Relations

Fig. 6.4 Publications of our Office

Resource Centre

6.7 Our Resource Centre is a mini-library of Ombudsman-related publications with a wealth of our *OmbudsNews*, video recordings and newsclips on our activities as well as periodicals from overseas ombudsman offices. It is open to all and often we arrange for groups to come and sample our stock.

6.8 Members of the public are welcome to visit our Resource Centre individually or in groups from youth and elderly centres, schools and other community organisations. Visitors are briefed by our staff on our role and functions and invited to give their views on our operation. Such visits are an important means to enhance public understanding of our Office and to glean feedback for our own improvement. In 2007/08, we had about 1,076 persons from 27 groups visiting our Office. This compares with 727 from 19 groups in 2006/07.

Fig. 6.5

Group Visit to Resource Centre

From	Groups	Visitors
Schools	10	361
Youth centres	4	160
Elderly centres	12	519
Others	1	36
Total	**27**	**1,076**

The Ombudsman's Awards

6.9 As before, efforts of public organisations and their officers exemplary in handling complaints and improving public administration were honoured with The Ombudsman's Awards. In October 2007, The Ombudsman presented the Awards to the Buildings Department (Grand Award), the Judiciary Administration and the Student Financial Assistance Agency and also 24 public officers. Over 150 representatives from more than 30 public organisations witnessed this proud occasion. We were particularly touched that some came with their family members.

Fig. 6.6 The Ombudsman's Awards Presentation Ceremony

Fig. 6.7

Winning Organisations for 2007
• Buildings Department (Grand Award)
• Judiciary Administration
• Student Financial Assistance Agency

Meeting with Departmental Directorate

6.10 With positive feedback in the past two years, I continued to meet with directorate officers of Government departments during the year to share with them my experience in complaint handling and to exchange views on issues of mutual concern in public administration and service delivery. The meeting with the directorate and senior staff of the Judiciary Administration in May 2007 was fruitful in strengthening communication over complaint handling and mutual understanding.

Seminars

6.11 We hold seminars from time to time to explain and promote the mission of The Ombudsman to different sectors. This year, new District Councillors have come into office. Given their role in district administration and their interface with the local community, we plan for a seminar to brief their assistants on our work and to seek their support for our services. The seminar is scheduled in April 2008 for around 60 participants.

6.12 In the meantime, I am ready to meet with the newly elected Chairmen of the 19 District Councils to reinforce our mutual interest in better public service for our community. The meeting is planned for early 2008/09.

Fig. 6.8

Individual Awards for 2007

Organisation	No. of Awardees
Architectural Services Department	1
Buildings Department	1
Civil Engineering and Development Department	1
Correctional Services Department	1
Customs and Excise Department	1
Department of Health	1
Drainage Services Department	1
Electrical and Mechanical Services Department	1
Environmental Protection Department	1
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department	1
Highways Department	1
Hospital Authority	1
Housing Department	1
Immigration Department	1
Inland Revenue Department	1
Intellectual Property Department	1
Land Registry	1
Legal Aid Department	1
Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes Authority	1
Post Office	1
Rating and Valuation Department	1
Securities and Futures Commission	1
Social Welfare Department	1
Water Supplies Department	1

Chapter 6

Publicity and Public Relations

Outreach Talks

6.13 Apart from receiving visitors, we also reach out to deliver talks to Government departments, schools, universities and centres for elderly persons. This year, we visited 10 departments and public organisations.

Meeting with Legislative Councillors

6.14 Each year, I attend before the Legislative Council ("LegCo") towards the end of the year. This year, the meeting was on 11 December 2007. I briefed members on my work and exchanged views with them on the operation of my office. They were concerned over my review of The Ombudsman's jurisdiction, completed and put to the Administration for consideration (see **paras. 4.26 - 4.27** of Chapter 4).

6.15 In response to Members' request, the Administration released Part 1 of my jurisdictional review to the LegCo Panel on Administration of Judicial and Legal Services.

Support from Justices of the Peace

6.16 Since 1996, non-official JPs have been enlisted to join our Justices of the Peace ("JPs") Assistance Scheme. They support us in promoting public awareness of the ombudsman system. We keep our JPs updated regularly on the operation of public services by organising visits for them to sample the services of the organisations on Schedule 1 to The Ombudsman Ordinance. During the year, we arranged for their first-hand experience at the Airport Authority and the Lai King Assessment Centre of the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority. As always, there was fruitful exchange on operational processes and service delivery issues.

Fig. 6.9 JPs' Visit to the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority

Institutional Liaison

6.17 As the Secretary of both the International Ombudsman Institute ("IOI") and the Asian Ombudsman Association ("AOA"), I participate actively in their activities, to maintain close contact with our counterparts worldwide. This year, I attended the AOA Board of Directors Meeting and AOA Conference in Vietnam in April 2007, and the IOI Board of Directors Meeting in Sydney, Australia in early November 2007 respectively. Later in March 2008, I joined the 24th Australasian and Pacific Ombudsman Region Conference in Melbourne, Australia.

6.18 These activities help my Office to keep abreast with developments of ombudsman systems. They also maintain Hong Kong's firm repute in the

international arena. It can also assist in strengthening China's links with the regional and international bodies.

6.19 I will be hosting the IOI Board of Directors Meeting in November 2008.

Exchange with the Mainland

6.20 In late August 2007, I led a delegation to the Mainland for a week-long study tour under the auspices of the China Supervision Institute. We had in-depth exchange of views, sharing experience on systems and practices for monitoring public administration with the officials in Beijing, Dalian and Inner Mongolia. These sessions gave my colleagues and me insight into Mainland operations while offering our counterparts in China a clearer understanding of our processes and pursuits.

Fig. 6.10 China Exchange Programme

6.21 We have continued to receive groups from the Mainland. They are briefed by my senior officers on our jurisdiction and *modus operandi,* free and wide-ranging exchange of views and ideas would invariably follow. This year, we gave talks to four groups comprising 116 participants. We welcome such gatherings as they offer opportunities for better understanding and mutual benefit.

Thematic Household Survey

6.22 From time to time, we collect community feedback by commissioning Government's Census and Statistics Department to conduct Thematic Household Surveys. Our aim is to gauge the complaint culture of the local community and ascertain public expectations of statutory complaint channels. The findings give us pointers to fine-tune our *modus operandi*.

6.23 The latest survey was conducted in June 2007. Over 8,000 households were interviewed. This survey indicated that 18.4% of the respondents, compared with 13.8% in the March 2003 survey, had an experience of lodging a complaint against some Government departments or public bodies for maladministration and The Ombudsman's Office was among the top three complaint channels of the public, only after complaint channel of the department/public body concerned and District Council/members of District Council. I am delighted to note that my power in conducting direct investigations had captured greater public awareness than before. The summary of findings is at **Annex 9**.

6.24 We take reference from public opinions and media comments for enhancement of services and preview of practices. We strive for continuing improvement for efficient and effective services in promoting fair and open government.